

Message Text

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ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 EB-07 COME-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00

DODE-00 DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 L-03

XMB-02 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05 /047 W

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R 281027Z JUL 76

FM AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8116

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMCONSUL CASABLANCA

AMEMBASSY KINSHASA

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIBREVILLE 1488

CASABLANCA FOR RCAA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: EAIR EGEN GB

SUBJECT: CIVAIR: EXPANSION OF AIR GABON

REF: STATE 183355 (NOTAL)

1. DIXON SPEAS REPRESENTATIVES KIP AND DORMOY MET WITH PRESIDENCY DIRECTEUR DE CABINET MAYILA JUNE 27 TO PRESENT PROPOSAL FOR AIR GABON FEASIBILITY STUDY, AND WERE GIVEN ASSURANCE THAT CONTRACT WILL BE SIGNED PROMPTLY. THEY WILL BEGIN DATA-GATHERING TODAY AND HAVE APPOINTMENT JULY 30 FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION WITH MINTRANSPORT RAWIRI.

2. BOTH MAYILA AND RAWIRI (IN MEETING JULY 28 WITH CONGER OF DEPT. COMMERCE) STRESSED THEIR CONCERN THAT STUDY BE DONE CAREFULLY SO THAT GOG'S EVENTUAL DECISION ON AIR AFRIQUE MEMBERSHIP WILL BE SOLIDLY BASED ON FACTS AND NOT ON WISHFUL THINKING. MAYILA ALSO ASKED FOR COMPLETION OF STUDY AT EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE, BUT ADDED THAT THOROUGHNESS SHOULD NOT BE SACRIFIED TO SPEED.

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3. WITH REFERENCE TO ABIDJAN 6960 (NOTAL), IT MAY BE USEFUL TO RECALL THAT GOG'S TENTATIVE DECISION TO QUIT AIR AFRIQUE (WHICH HAS LAREADY MADE JEUNE AFRIQUE'S JULY 30 ISSUE) IS BASED ON GABONESE PERCEPTION OF BOTH AIR AFRIQUE AND GABONESE NATIONAL INTEREST, NOT ON ANY USG ENCOURAGEMENT OR STIMULATION. AS MAYILA AND RAWIRI HAVE MADE CLEAR, FINAL DECISION WILL BE MADE BY GOG IN LIGHT OF THESE SAME FACTORS, PLUS RESULTS OF BOEING AND DIXON SPEAS STUDIES AND PRESUMABLY ALSO OF BONGO'S APPROACHES TO GISCARD FOR AIR FRANCE SUPPORT. USG ROLE IN ENTIRE PROCESS IS ONE OF PROVIDING NORMAL COMMERCIAL SERVICES TO FRIENDLY GOVERNMENT AT ITS REQUEST, PERHAPS INCLUDING EXIMBANK FINANCING IF GOG DECIDES PROCEED WITH AIR GABON EXPANSION AND CAN THEN PRESENT EFFECTIVE CASE. WE COULD NOT REFUSE SUCH SERVICES WITHOUT INCURRING GOG HOSTILITY AND OPENING OURSELVES TO CHARGE OF INTERFERENCE IN GABONESE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS, WITH ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES BOTH FOR OVERALL BILATERAL RELATIONSHIP AND FOR PROSPECTS OF AMERICAN FIRMS MOVING INTO CONTENTION FOR OTHER MAJOR PROJECTS. STEIGMAN

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